



AOT in Action

Welcome to AOT in Action, your weekly e-newsletter from the Arizona Office of Tourism (AOT).

A Message from Director Sherry Henry:

Good afternoon,

What a thrilling week as the Grand Canyon State shined in the worldwide spotlight! Congratulations to Brooks Koepka who won the Waste Management Phoenix Open on Sunday after four days of competitive golf. Thank you to The Thunderbirds, Waste Management, TPC Scottsdale, tournament sponsors and golf fans who were instrumental in making “The Greatest Show on Grass” the best attended tournament on the PGA Tour and worldwide. This year’s event broke several crowd records with the weeklong attendance totaling 564,368 attendees.

Super Bowl XLIX was a smashing success as a result of the great state of Arizona coming together to play host to the world’s biggest sporting event! Thank you again to The Arizona Super Bowl Host Committee, city leaders, Michael Bidwell, Arizona Cardinals, hospitality community, event sponsors and thousands of volunteers for making this historic football game possible. I wish to express my sincere gratitude to Tom Sadler of the Arizona Sports & Tourism Authority and Peter Sullivan of Global Spectrum along with their hard-working teams who were instrumental in ensuring the big game was flawlessly executed.

Congratulations to the New England Patriots and Super Bowl MVP Tom Brady who took home the Vince Lombardi trophy for their fourth Super Bowl win. What an exciting and suspenseful way to end the game! Finally, I am extremely proud of the Arizona Cardinals head coach Bruce Arians who was named the Associated Press 2014 NFL Coach of the Year. What an honor!

Super Bowl XLIX was the first event of Arizona’s trifecta of national sporting events taking place over three years. In 2016, Glendale will host the College Football Playoff National Championship game and one year later, will welcome the NCAA Men's Basketball Final Four for a weeklong event. These games help solidify Arizona as a prime destination to host high-profile events. We look forward to receiving even more worldwide praise and recognition for the unparalleled tourism amenities, venues, attractions and destinations travelers can experience during their Arizona visit.

Best wishes for a great Arizona week!

Sherry Henry
Director, Arizona Office of Tourism

AOT News

AOT Launches Innovative Travel Application

Thanks to the release of a new app, people seeking information on Arizona's travel industry can now access data quickly and easily on their smart phone or iPad. AOT is the first state travel agency in the United States to launch an app of this kind – one that provides quality, reliable mobile data on the impact of Arizona's tourism industry on the state's economy and its residents. [Read Full Press Release](#).

Arizona Travel Impacts, the new mobile version of AOT's annually published "Arizona Travel Impacts" report, breaks down visitor spending, jobs, direct earnings and tax receipts generated by the travel industry by state, region, county and legislative district. The free app includes historical data dating back to 1998 and is available for download on iPhone, iPad and Android devices at tourism.az.gov/research-statistics/economic-impact via Apple's App Store and Google Play. The data is updated annually.

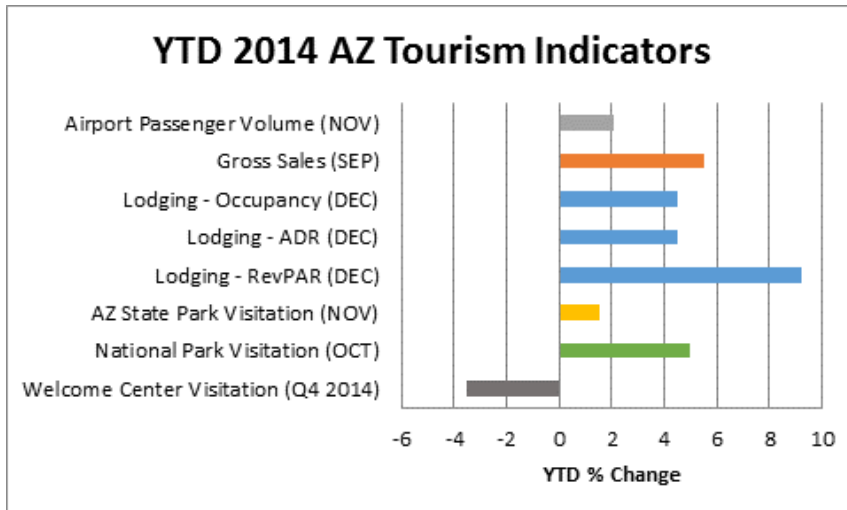
The Arizona Travel Impacts app data is valuable to AOT's constituents, including members of the media, legislators, tourism partners, destination marketing organizations, statewide economic representatives, businesses and community leaders, along with municipal and state officials. AOT created the app in partnership with Dean Runyan Associates, Inc., a market research firm based in Portland, Ore., that has assisted the organization with reliable travel research since 2004.

New Reports Available on AOT's Research Website

The following reports are now available in the [Research and Statistics section](#) of AOT's business-to-business website tourism.az.gov:

- Airport Passenger Volume November 2014
- Arizona Lodging December 2014
- National, Regional, Arizona Lodging 4th Quarter 2014
- County Lodging 4th Quarter 2014
- National Park Visitation November 2014 (preliminary)
- State Park Visitation November 2014
- Welcome Center Visitation 4th Quarter 2014

Please note, due to technical difficulties, some research reports are not loaded onto the website. For more information, please visit tourism.az.gov or contact Research Specialist Colleen Floyd at cfloyd@azot.gov.



*Percent change based on most recent complete report. Preliminary reports have not been included.

Arizona Has Presence at Annual Travel Exchange Convention in New Orleans

Trade and Media Relations Manager Kristin Swanson attended [Travel Exchange](#) (Trex), a convention that combines the NTA Annual Convention and UMA Motor Coach Expo, in New Orleans Jan. 18-23, 2015. The annual event is the largest marketplace for North American packaged travel companies to meet with North American and international travel suppliers. More than 2,000 delegates attended Trex this year. The Arizona delegation had over 40 participants who connected with top travel companies interested in enhancing their Arizona itineraries and creating exclusive experiences for their customers. For more information, or to request a copy of the trade show report, please contact Kristin at kswanson@azot.gov or 602-364-3696.

Upcoming Events & Activities

[RTO Summit West](#)

Date: February 25-26

Location: Marina del Ray, CA

[Mexico Sales and Media Mission](#)

Date: March 2-6

Locations: Mexico City and Cancun, Mexico

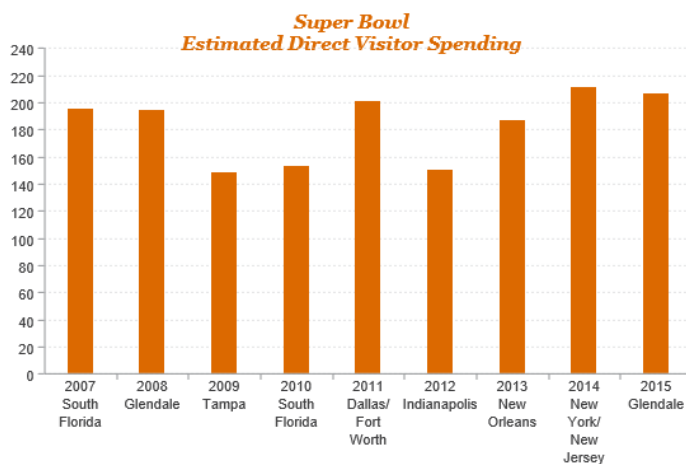
Industry News

PwC US Anticipates Super Bowl XLIX to Generate Estimated \$206 million in Direct Spending for Greater Phoenix Area

[PwC US](#) estimates Super Bowl XLIX will generate approximately \$206 million in direct spending throughout the Greater Phoenix area by the National Football League (NFL), businesses, visitors, and media. This estimate includes spending on area lodging, transportation, food and beverage, entertainment, business services, and other hospitality and tourism activities. It is based on a proprietary analysis, which considers characteristics unique to this year's event such as the participating teams, local market attributes, national economic conditions, and scheduled corporate and other ancillary activities.

Excluded from the analysis is the so-called "multiplier effect," which accounts for "indirect" impacts, such as a concession company's purchase of goods from local producers and manufacturers, and "induced" impacts, which occur when the income levels of residents rise as a result of increased economic activity and a portion of the increased income is re-spent within the local economy.

The following graphic illustrates, in nominal dollars, the direct spending associated with the Super Bowl since 2006. As shown, the direct spending generated by this year's event is expected to trail only last year's Super Bowl held in the New York/New Jersey market.



"This year's projection is the second highest on record, however the inflation adjusted result is approximately two percent lower than our estimate for Arizona's last Super Bowl in 2008; the market benefiting that year from pre-recession spending levels and a slightly higher profile game matchup involving a New York market team and the Patriots attempt at a perfect season," said Adam Jones, director, sports and tourism sector, PwC US.

While its relative impact may not top the 2008 edition, this year's Super Bowl is the first in an unprecedented series of mega events to be hosted by the Phoenix market over the next three years. This event series, which also includes the College Football Playoff National Championship in 2016 and NCAA Final Four in 2017, may signal Arizona's coming of age as a special event destination capable of hosting not only its recurring annual calendar of activity, but rotations of the country's most high-profile events.

Jones further noted, "This year, Super Bowl week will offer a unique test of the market's maturity as it also hosts the annual Waste Management Phoenix Open golf tournament over the

same week, an event that has continued to increase in scale and impact since the market last hosted the Super Bowl in 2008. While crowding or displacement effects are possible, their effects are likely to be mitigated by the market's increased hotel supply, air access, light rail system, dispersed geography, and other attributes associated with a well-established winter tourism destination." (*Travel Daily News*, Jan. 28)

National Publication Ranks Top Hotels for 2015, Canyon Suites at The Phoenician No. 8

Selecting the perfect hotel can be difficult. Which is more important: location or amenities? Are you more concerned about getting a good night's rest or making sure the property offers plenty of perks like a pool, gym and business center? What if you're looking for a combination of all of the above? Determining a hotel's quality and assessing all of its offerings can prove challenging from afar. That's where *U.S. News & World Report's* annual Best Hotels in the USA rankings come in.

The travel editors at *U.S. News & World Report* researched and analyzed an array of resources – from guest reviews and expert recommendations to travel websites and industry award lists – to solidify an extensive list of the best places to stay in the United States. Our editors used a [comprehensive methodology](#) to evaluate more than 1,700 luxury hotels across the USA, taking into account the hotel's class rating, the number and prominence of industry awards it received, and traveler reviews. From historical hotels set in the heart of cities like Washington, D.C., and Chicago to charming resorts found in secluded areas in the South and across the islands of Hawaii, this group of properties highlights the numerous and diverse lodging choices across America.

Quite a few newcomers cracked the top 10 list this year, thanks in part to its improved ratings among travelers and additional industry accolades. The 10 top hotels in the USA for 2015 rise above the rest of their hospitality peers because they offer the right mix of what most travelers are looking for in a hotel – picturesque locations, comfortable accommodations, luxe in-room amenities and superb service.

[See the full list of the Best Hotels in the USA.](#)

[10. The Jefferson, Washington DC](#)

Washington, D.C.

The Jefferson is set in the heart of D.C., just north of the White House, making it a convenient spot for visitors to the nation's capital. Thanks to its higher traveler satisfaction rating and its collection of awards, the hotel made an impressive jump on *U.S. News & World Report's* Best Hotels in the USA list, rising up the ranks from No. 99 in 2014 to No. 10 in 2015. The historic hotel is host to a wealth of amenities, including an on-site spa, free Wi-Fi access, upscale dining venues and a cozy lounge, and its charming decor features tributes to its namesake, Thomas Jefferson, and his Monticello home. Aside from honors from "Fodor's" and "Frommer's," The Jefferson earned recognition from more industry experts in 2015, including *Travel + Leisure* and Lonely Planet. Plus travelers praise The Jefferson (it nabbed a spot on the *Condé Nast* Readers' Choice List), noting the hotel's staff members went out of their way to make their stays memorable.

[9. Four Seasons Hotel Chicago](#)

Chicago

Impressive customer service, rooms with city and Lake Michigan views, and a 50-foot-long indoor swimming pool are just a few of the perks that set this hotel apart from its other Chicago competitors, according to recent guests. Visitors were particularly impressed with the housekeeping staff and friendliness of the hotel's employees. What's more, the property offers the Four Seasons brand's luxury amenities like MALIN+GOETZ toiletries, spacious accommodations and innovative dining. Situated on the Windy City's popular Magnificent Mile, the Four Seasons Hotel Chicago also earned the prestigious AAA Five Diamond Award for 2015 and Forbes Travel Guide Five Star Award for 2014. The combination of industry accolades and praise from guests helped propel the hotel up from its No. 50 rank last year.

[8. The Canyon Suites at The Phoenician](#)

Scottsdale, Ariz.

An oasis of tranquility on the outskirts of Phoenix, The Canyon Suites at The Phoenician sits at the base of Camelback Mountain. Aside from amazing mountain and desert views, the smaller boutique resort operating within The Phoenician complex offers oversized suites with private terraces, marble bathrooms with separate showers and bathtubs, and complimentary Wi-Fi access. The property, which ranked No. 31 in 2014, also houses a 27-hole golf course for those interested in hitting the links and a Tennis Garden featuring 11 courts. The private infinity pool is another standout amenity for guests at the Canyon Suites. "Opulent," "accommodating" and "divine" are just some of the adjectives visitors use to describe the hotel, which earns plenty of additional praise from critics and patrons: The hotel received a Frommer's Exceptional rating and *Condé Nast* Readers' Choice Award this year, on top of the 2015 AAA Five Diamond and 2014 *Forbes* Travel Guide Five Star awards.

[7. The Grand Del Mar](#)

San Diego

The Grand Del Mar is consistent – year after year guests laud the hotel's outstanding service, impeccable grounds and beautiful location in Carmel Valley just north of San Diego. Its consistency has earned it numerous industry awards, including the AAA Five Diamond Award and a spot on *Travel + Leisure* 500 World's Best Hotels list in 2015. Its awards and overwhelmingly positive guest reviews helped the Grand Del Mar secure the No. 7 spot on the Best Hotels in the USA ranking for the second consecutive year. The property offers guests the choice between rooms, suites or villas, and the Grand Del Mar is home to a sprawling five-star spa, a Tom Fazio-designed golf course, and award-winning restaurants. Plus, complimentary services like transportation to the beach, organized Saturday morning waterfall hikes and fitness classes put the Grand Del Mar a touch above its nearby competitors.

[6. The Langham, Chicago](#)

Chicago

First opened in September 2013, The Langham, Chicago has already become a standout in the luxury hotel scene. The property earned distinction from *Travel + Leisure* on the 500 World's Best Hotels list and "It List," as well as the coveted AAA Five Diamond Award in 2015. The Langham is set in the heart of the city along the banks of the Chicago River, making it an ideal spot for visitors traveling for work or for play thanks to its proximity to downtown businesses and the Windy City's top attractions. On-site amenities include everything from the 22,000-square-foot spa and indoor swimming pool to the tasty dishes at Traveller. In its short time open, The Langham has received praise from numerous visitors for its upscale accommodations and the staff's helpfulness and attention to detail.

[5. Four Seasons Hotel Seattle](#)

Seattle

The Four Seasons Hotel Seattle impresses guests with its outdoor pool, rooms with sweeping city and Elliot Bay views, and excellent service. And the hotel's tailored packages make visitors feel like VIPs, whether they're interested in a private tour of Dale Chihuly's studio and the Chihuly Garden and Glass or a romantic retreat complete with a sunset sailboat ride. This Four Seasons outpost's location isn't too shabby either – it's within walking distance of the Pike Place Market, Seattle Aquarium and Seattle Art Museum. Also winning favor with travel experts, the Four Seasons Hotel Seattle is a 2015 *Condé Nast* Traveler Gold Award recipient and 2015 AAA Five Star Award-winning property.

[4. The Allison Inn & Spa](#)

Newberg, Ore.

Solidifying a spot in the top five Best Hotels in the USA for the second year in a row, The Allison Inn & Spa is nestled in Oregon's wine country, the Willamette Valley. The intimate property boasts just 77 rooms and suites, all of which have floor-to-ceiling windows, gas fireplaces and balconies or terraces. Highly regarded by travelers for its seclusion and quiet atmosphere, the hotel also houses a 15,000-square-foot spa that offers guests a chance for even more relaxation with treatments like its signature grape seed body scrubs and mimosa massages. What's more, The Allison Inn & Spa – a Lonely Planet Top Pick, *Travel + Leisure* 500 World's Best Hotel and 2015 AAA Five Diamond Award recipient – gains recognition from travelers for the delectable dishes and wine served at JORY Restaurant & Bar and the hotel staff's willingness to make guests' stays exceptional.

[3. The Inn at Palmetto Bluff, a Montage Resort](#)

Bluffton, S.C.

The Inn at Palmetto Bluff's mix of Southern charm and active pursuits just west of popular Hilton Head Island attracts vacationers year after year. Guests can kayak, canoe or paddleboard along the May River, try their hand at fishing or explore the more than 20,000 acres of land by hiking, biking or horseback riding. Experts and travelers alike love this property's quaint, Southern-style cottages complete with vaulted ceilings, fireplaces and screened-in porches, and its top-notch service staff. So much so that, aside from being recognized by *U.S. News & World Report*, the Inn at Palmetto Bluff also made the 2015 AAA Five Diamond Award list and the *Condé Nast* Readers' Choice List.

[2. The Lodge at Sea Island](#)

Sea Island, Ga.

The Lodge at Sea Island is no stranger to accolades – it was named a 2015 *Travel + Leisure* 500 World's Best Hotel and received the 2015 AAA Five Diamond Award, plus last year it was named *U.S. News & World Report's* No. 1 Best Hotel in the USA. Though it was nudged out of the top spot, this hotel still maintains a high standard of excellence by providing guests with an abundance of amenities and attractive accommodations. The property features three championship golf courses, a massive spa and fitness center, tennis and squash facilities, and multiple restaurants. Meanwhile, the Lodge's English country manor-styled rooms are outfitted with hardwood floors, Oriental rugs, marble bathrooms with deep soaking tubs and 24-hour butler service. Plus, according to recent travelers, simple gestures like employees calling guests by their names make visitors feel truly special at this hotel.

1. Rancho Valencia Resort & Spa

Rancho Santa Fe, Calif.

Soaring to the No. 1 spot on the Best Hotels in the USA ranking this year (up from No. 9 in 2014), the Mediterranean-inspired Rancho Valencia Resort & Spa sits on 45 acres of verdant gardens and olive groves in southern California. In addition to racking up some of the industry's most distinguished accolades, including the *Condé Nast Traveler* Gold Award, the 2015 AAA Five Diamond Award, and recognition as one of Travel + Leisure's 500 World's Best Hotels, the Relais & Châteaux resort receives plenty of compliments from satisfied guests. The hotel's staff is often described as warm, friendly, and helpful, and the grounds as well maintained. The casitas are also met with praise for their custom wooden furnishings, comfy beds, and ample amenities, including Illy espresso machines, private patios, and nightly turndown service. Previous visitors also appreciate the variety of on-site activities and features, which include a pool, yoga classes, tennis courts, and bikes for use. (*U.S. News & World Report*, Jan. 27)

Hyatt Creates New Brand for Modern Travelers

Hyatt Hotels and Resorts announced a new brand – a "lifestyle" hotel chain appealing to the modern traveler. It will be called Hyatt Centric.

Hyatt Centric is a full-service brand designed to appeal to both business and leisure travelers. It will debut this summer, with more than 15 locations in cities such as New York, Paris, Miami, Chicago and Atlanta.

It's the sixth brand Hyatt has launched since 2006.

Most of the biggest hotel chains in the world have created lifestyle or boutique hotel brands to appeal to travelers who want to stay at hotels that value design, technology, and a culinary experience. Hilton recently launched Canopy. Best Western will soon launch Vib. InterContinental Hotels Group has acquired Kimpton, one of the largest boutique hotel chains in the country.

But Hyatt says it can go beyond those brands.

"A very important group of travelers is looking for an experience that we feel we can fulfill," Mark Hoplamazian, president and chief executive officer of Hyatt, said at the American Lodging Investment Summit.

Hoplamazian says Hyatt is appealing to "Modern Explorers." Many hotel chains have been targeting millennial travelers, those in their 20s and early 30s. Their purchasing power is expected to grow exponentially. But they have not yet realized it.

"The modern explorers are truly a savvy, curious group. Their expectations are simple, but their standards are high and they want their experience to be intuitive and smart. They want options and all the must-haves from a full service hotel but without any fuss or complications," says Kristine Rose, vice president of brands at Hyatt.

The key elements of Hyatt Centric are:

- Destination. The artwork, furniture, food and beverage will reflect the locale.

- Less is more. The brand will focus on simplicity, Hyatt says. Room service will be offered in a knock n' drop service. Order food and a bag of it will be delivered.
- The Corner Library will be a place to work, socialize or read magazines. A bar and restaurant will offer signature food and cocktails.
- Digital. Guests will be able to order what they want online but still enjoy human interaction, Hyatt says.

"There's no substitute for a live conversation with someone who can tell you firsthand about that interesting café you found on your smartphone," says Rose. (*USA Today*, Jan. 28)

Visitation to U.S. Grows 7 Percent in First 10 Months of 2014

Arrival statistics continue to stream in for 2014, solidifying the United States' ability to reach a record number of visitors' arrivals for 2014.

International visitors arriving to the United States in the first 10 months of the year – 62.7 million – increased seven percent compared to the same period in 2013, [according to data published by the U.S. Department of Commerce](#) this week.

In October specifically, visitation increased six percent to 6.3 million international travelers in 2014.

In October, eight of the top 10 source markets posted an increase in visitors. This is an improvement over September [during which](#) six of the largest source markets posted a decrease or no change in visitation.

Canada and Japan were the only countries to experience slight drops in visitation in October while China exceeded 20-percent growth. (*Skift*, Jan. 20)

Country of Residence	% Change October 14 vs. 13
Canada	-2%
Mexico	15%
United Kingdom	5%
Japan	-3%
Germany	1%
Brazil	13%
France	2%
People's Republic of China (EXCL HK)	21%
South Korea	14%
Australia	12%

National Park Lodges: Five to Visit in Winter

Most of us view America's national parks as summer destinations. The parks are special places where we hike the trails, boat the lakes, fish the streams, and enjoy nature under the warmth of

the summer sun. Although a few national parks such as Everglades have their peak visitation during winter, most parks are busiest during summer. This is when vehicle traffic moves slowly, visitor centers are crowded, parking lots are jammed, and national park lodges are booked months ahead.

For those who are a little more adventurous, an off-season winter visit to a national park can be a unique and rewarding experience made even better by staying in a national park lodging facility. Although the majority of national park lodges are open only from spring through fall, some lodges remain open to offer guests a true winter experience. Below are five national park lodges that should make for a great winter stay. These aren't the only lodges open during winter, but we believe you can't go wrong with a stay at any of these five lodges.

[Old Faithful Snow Lodge and Cabins](#) – *Yellowstone National Park, Wyo.*

There is no better place for a winter vacation than Yellowstone, and no better place in the park to stay than Old Faithful Snow Lodge. Actually, even though Yellowstone has nine lodging facilities, only two – Snow Lodge and Mammoth Hot Springs Hotel – are open during the winter. The three-story Snow Lodge has 100 guest rooms plus a grill, restaurant, cocktail lounge, gift shop, and a nice two-story lobby with a large gas fireplace. Two classes of nearby cabins are also open during winter. Winter sports equipment rentals are available. Access to Snow Lodge is available via scheduled snowcoach from Headwaters Lodge at Flagg Ranch through the park's south entrance or Mammoth Hot Springs Hotel at the north end of the park. The lodge is open during winter from mid-December through March 1. Rates range from \$104 for the small cabins to \$250 for rooms in the lodge.

[National Park Inn](#) – *Mt. Rainier National Park, Wash.*

The smaller of this park's two lodges is open year-round. Surrounded by old-growth forest, National Park Inn has 25 rooms, all but seven of which have a private bathroom. The cozy lodge has a nice guest lounge with a large stone fireplace, sofas, tables, chairs, and a closet full of games and puzzles. Winter sports equipment is available for rent. Located in the Longmire National Historic District that once served as the location for park headquarters, the inn is near the Longmire Museum. Only the Nisqually Entrance in the southwestern section of the park is open for private vehicles during winter. Rates for rooms with a private bath range from \$165 to \$205. Rooms without a private bath are about \$50 less per night.

[Wuksachi Village and Lodge](#) – *Sequoia/Kings Canyon National Park, Calif.*

Wuksachi Lodge opened in 1999 with a rustic cedar registration/dining building plus three nearby cedar lodge structures with 102 guest rooms. The facility sits on a hillside amid large cedar, sugar pine, and fir trees. The registration building boasts an attractive lobby where guests can read, talk, or just relax near a wood-burning stove. The dining room on the back side of the building has a stone fireplace and features large windows providing great views. Snowshoeing and cross-country skiing are popular and during the winter months, the gift shop is converted into a rental office for snowshoes, skies, and other equipment. Ranger-guided snowshoeing walks are offered on most weekends. Wuksachi is open all year and winter rates range from \$110 to \$150. John Muir Lodge in neighboring Kings Canyon National Park is also open during winter.

[Bright Angel Lodge](#) – *Grand Canyon National Park, Ariz.*

Bright Angel is a lodging complex consisting of a rustic registration building, 18 cabins, and several dormitory-style buildings on the Grand Canyon's South Rim. The location is at the center of South Rim activity and guest rooms are handy to eating facilities, gift shops, and other lodging on this side of the canyon. The rim is a short walk from any of Bright Angel's lodging. The Rim Cabins situated beside a paved walking trail along the rim are our favorites in this lodging complex. Other winter lodging options on the South Rim include Maswik, Thunderbird, Kachina, and the El Tovar. Bright Angel Lodge is open year-round and rates range from \$84 for lodge rooms with a shared bathroom to \$185 for a Rim Cabin with a fireplace (our favorite).

[Yosemite Lodge at the Falls](#) – Yosemite National Park, Calif.

Yosemite Lodge offers a two-story motel unit plus over two dozen buildings with lodge rooms in the heart of beautiful Yosemite Valley. The facility is in a convenient location with nearby stores and restaurants. Cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and ice skating are popular winter activities in the valley. A free shuttle offers transportation to Badger Pass, a full-service ski resort with downhill skiing, snowboarding, and snow tubing. While the valley can be frustratingly congested during the busy summer months, winter tends to be quiet and peaceful. Room rates range from \$110 to \$170 per night depending upon the dates chosen. The Ahwahnee and Curry Village also offer winter lodging in Yosemite Valley. (*USA Today, Jan. 8*)

Calendar of Events

Visit www.visitarizona.com to find information on all the exciting [events, festivals and activities](#) held throughout the Grand Canyon State!

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